

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Draft Policy Recommendations

October 22, 2020

Department of Planning & Zoning

Office of Housing



Purpose of Study

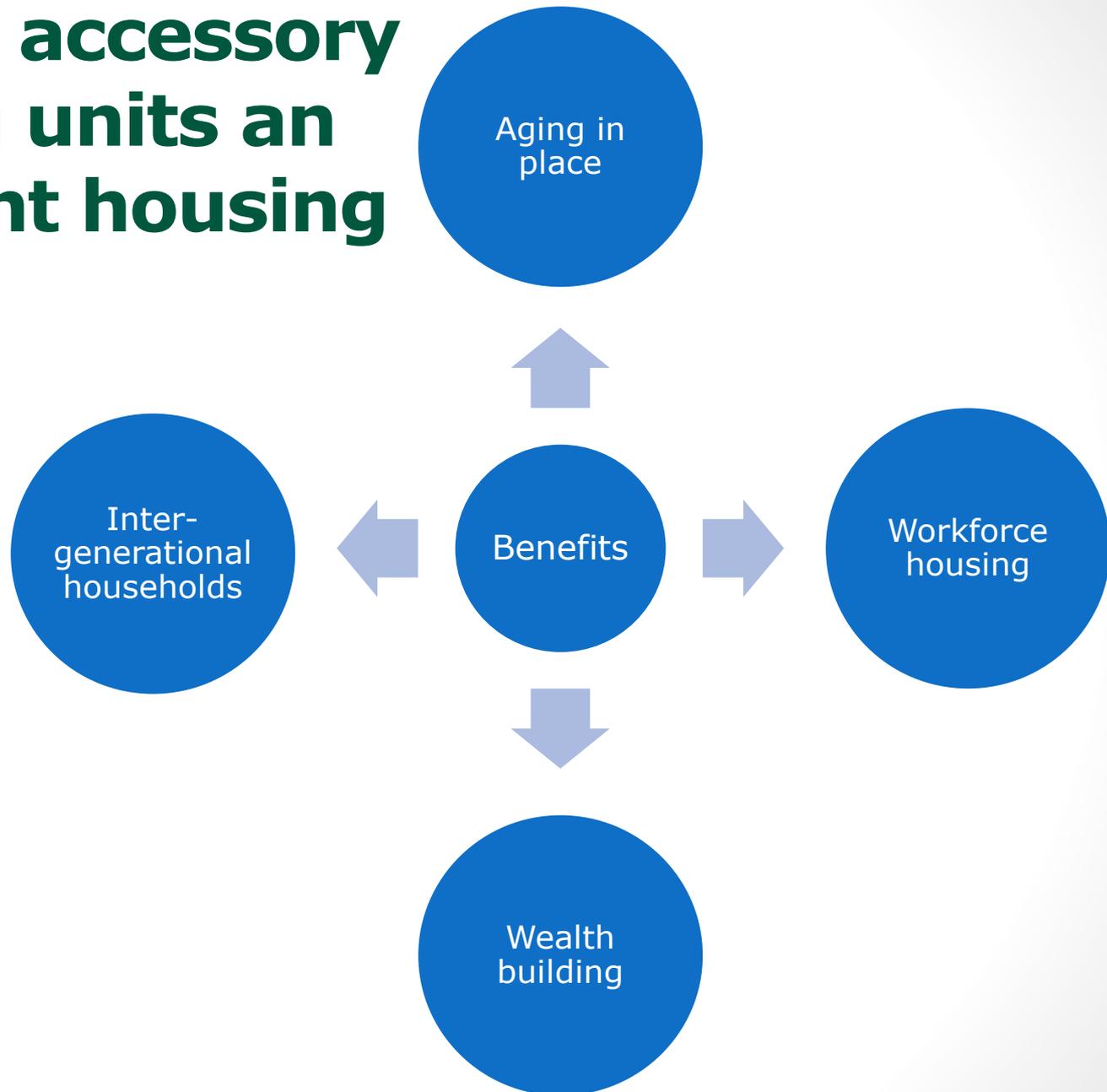
- Consistent with the recommendations of the **Housing Master Plan** and **Age Friendly Plan for a Livable Community**, and the **City Strategic Plan's** commitment to inclusive neighborhoods, the study was launched to draft an ADU policy to help expand housing options, affordability and accessibility in the city
- The process is informing the development of a proposed zoning amendment to allow ADUs under certain circumstances

What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit?

Secondary housing unit on a residential lot with a separate kitchen, sleeping area, and bathroom.



Why are accessory dwelling units an important housing option?



ADUs in our midst

Jurisdictions with ADUs policies:

- Arlington County
- District of Columbia
- Montgomery County
- Fairfax County (serves elderly and disabled residents)

ADUs are envisioned in the Beauregard and Potomac Yard small area plans.

Guest House Exterior in Potomac Yard



Interior of Guest House





Outreach to Date

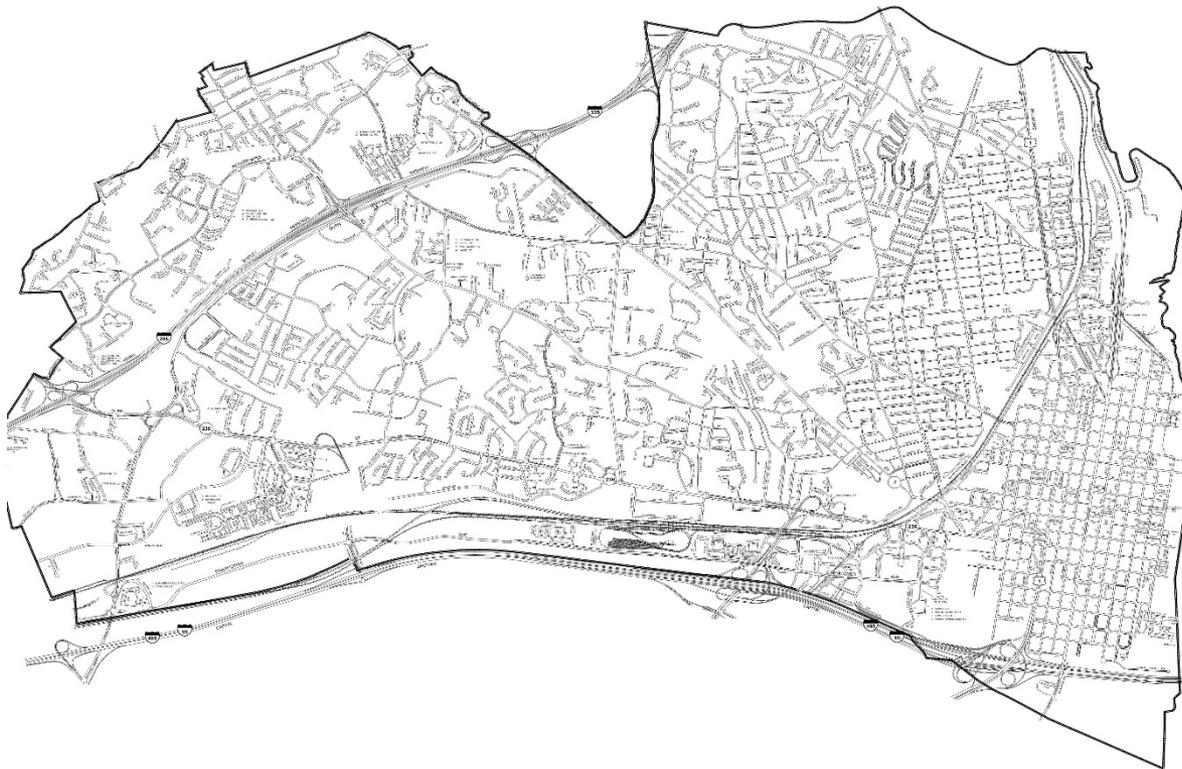
- Mar. 11:** Commission on Aging briefing
- Apr. 17:** Intro to ADUs video presentation posted
- May 13:** Del Ray Citizens Association briefing
- Jul. 15:** Follow-up ADU video presentation posted
- Aug. 18:** North Ridge Citizens' Association briefing
- Aug. 27:** AHAAC briefing
- Sep. 14:** second North Ridge Citizens' Association briefing
- Sep. 21:** Second Commission on Aging briefing
- Oct. 1:** Second AHAAC briefing
- Oct. 6:** City Council briefing
- Oct. 9:** Draft policy recommendations released and questionnaire posted



Draft Policy Recommendations

Permit ADUs City-wide

Allow one ADU on any property developed with a single-family, two-family or townhouse dwelling.



ADU could be located within existing home



Or within a detached structure



Separate ADU Permit Required

A separate, no-fee permit administered by Planning and Zoning shall be required for ADUs.

Having a permit process for ADUs would:

- Increase predictability for applicants
- Ease implementation and enforcement of the proposed rules

ADU Use Limitations

- Only one ADU shall be permitted on any lot.
- A resident of the property shall reside in either the ADU or the main house (owner occupancy requirement)
- The ADU and main house shall be under common ownership.

These limits are based on best practices and would ensure that the use of an ADU remains accessory to the use of the main house.



Short-term Rentals

Following current City rules, short-term rentals of ADUs shall be permitted, however, concurrent rentals of both the ADU and the main house shall not be permitted.

Permitting short-term rentals would extend the same flexibility to ADU owners that is currently provided to the City's homeowners



Parking

No additional off-street parking shall be required for the ADU.

No required parking spaces shall be removed to accommodate ADU construction.

Requiring parking would increase the amount of off-street parking on a lot. Too much off-street parking could change a lot's appearance and could be incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Driveways tend to be made of impervious materials which can contribute to stormwater runoff issues.

Detached ADU Height and Size Limits

- ADU height shall not exceed main house's height or 20 feet, whichever is less.
- ADU size shall not exceed one-third of main house's square footage or 750 square feet, whichever is greater.
- Similar to how detached garages are excluded, ADUs will be eligible for partial exclusion from floor area as follows:
 - For lots 2,500 square feet or larger, 350 total square feet of all accessory buildings shall be excludable.
 - For lots 8,000 square feet or larger, 600 total square feet of accessory buildings shall be excludable.

Detached ADUs Continued

For example:

- On a 2,500 square-foot property that already has a detached garage and/or shed totaling 350 square feet or more, no portion of the detached structure containing the ADU could be excluded.
- On another 2,500 square-foot property that already has a 100 square-foot shed, 250 square feet of the detached structure containing the ADU could be excluded.



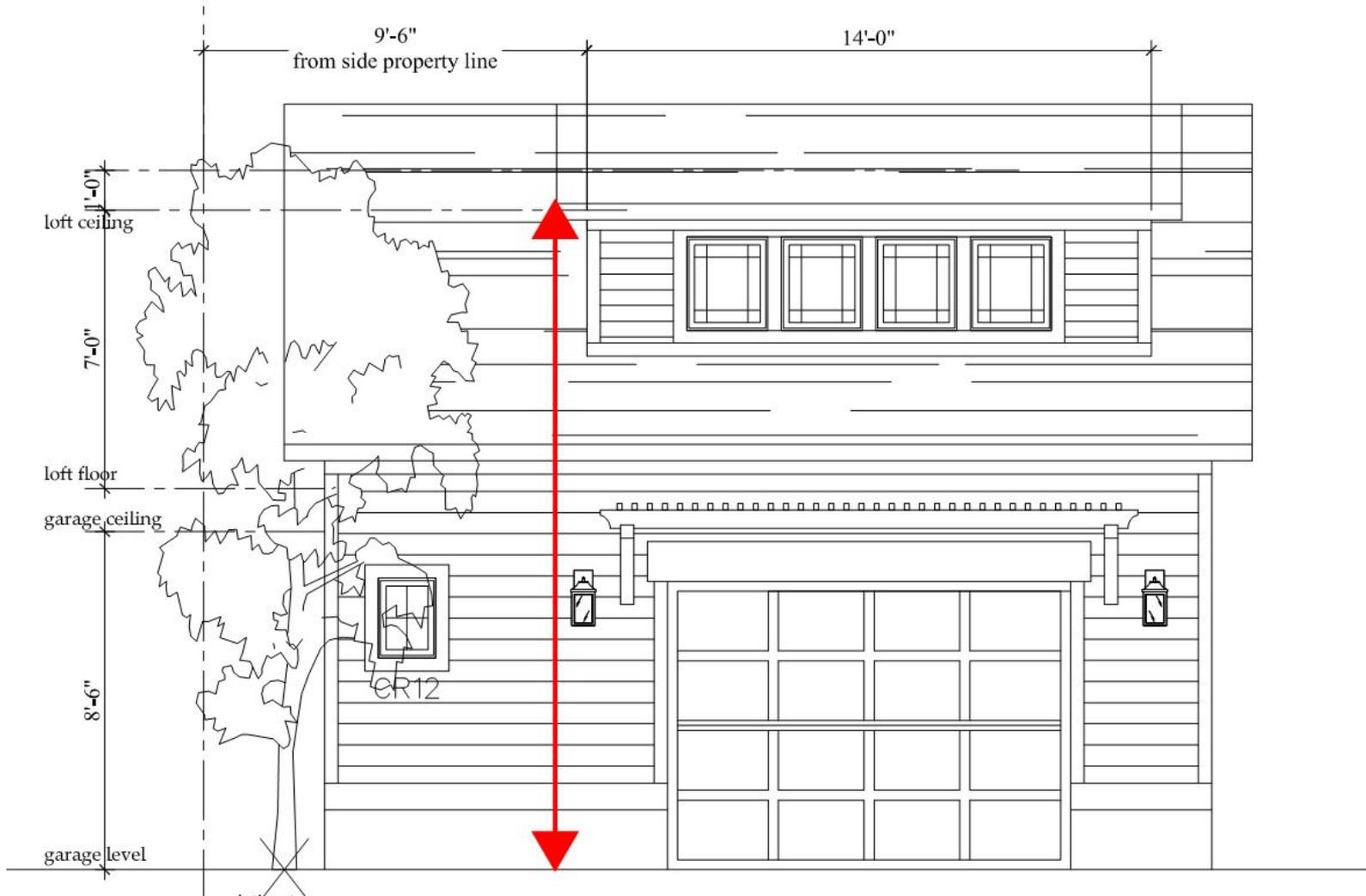
These height and size limits ensure that detached ADUs fit in without disturbing the character of a neighborhood. They should appear to be accessory to the main house.

"Accessory" means that the detached ADU is smaller and no taller than the main house.

Allowing the same exclusion for ADUs that currently applies to garages and sheds would provide flexibility for lots near their floor area maximums.

Setbacks for ADUs

- Consistent with building code requirements, ADUs shall be at least one-foot from side and rear lot lines.
- If the ADU has windows that face the nearest lot line, the ADU shall be at least three-feet from side and rear lot lines.
- Dormers shall be required to meet standard zone setbacks.



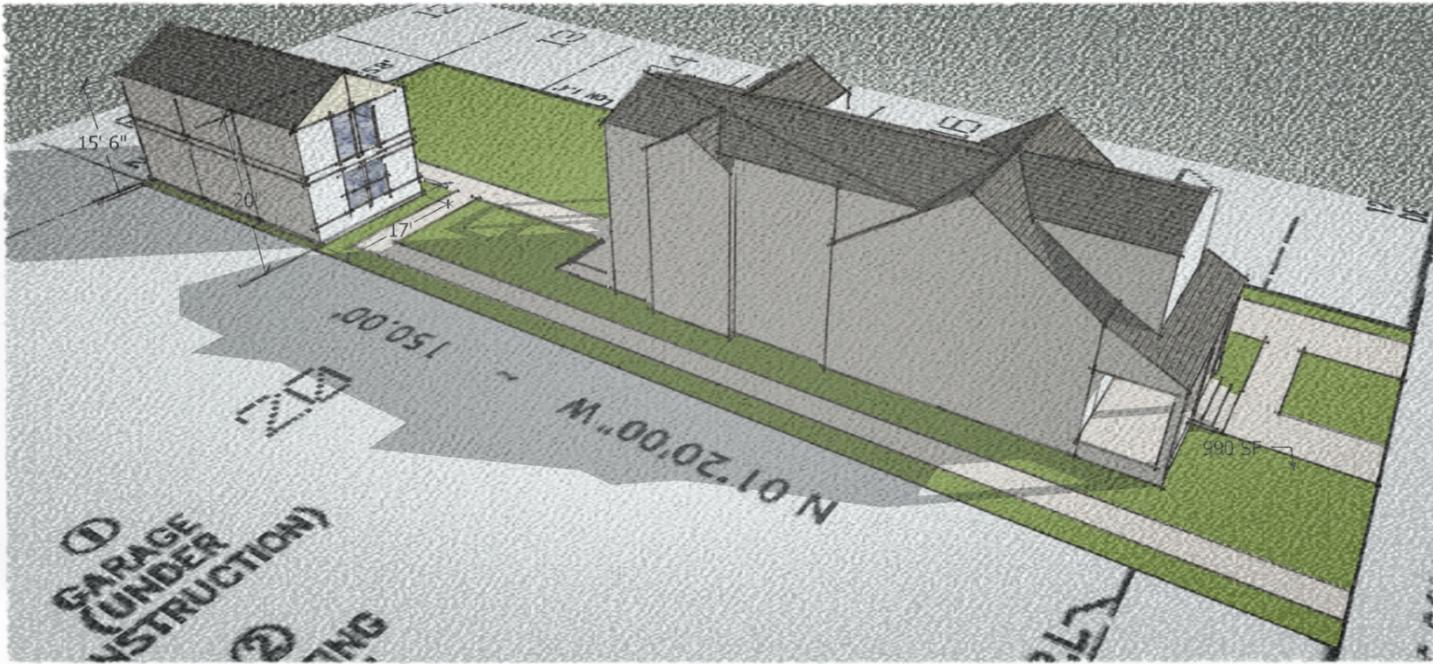


These setbacks would follow the general scale and placement of existing detached structures found throughout the City.

They also ensure that open space is minimally affected. On many lots, requiring ADUs to meet minimum zone setbacks would place them in the center of a homeowner's backyard, reducing desirable open space.

Further, requiring an ADU to meet minimum zone setbacks would place them in areas of a yard that have not been historically occupied by detached structures. Having an ADU "tucked" into a corner of a lot reduces its visual impact.







Further Refinement

This draft policy is subject to change based on feedback received and further staff analysis.



Continued Engagement

Please provide feedback on the proposal via the online questionnaire (closes November 6) found on the [project website](#)

Planning Commission scheduled for December 1 and City Council scheduled for December 12



Contact Us!

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Discussion